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INSIDE



Rifle Range

The Manta Ray Battalion cadets of the Saipan Southern High School have reason to be happy these days with the inauguration of a newly constructed rifle range.

Page 10



Mass Killing

Six coroners, triple the typical weekend staff, worked in shifts Sunday to identify the nine victims of a mass killing, believed to be all family members of a man who lived a bizarre life of polygamy and incest.

Page 13



New Spin

Norah Jones logged her fourth week atop the national album sales chart by selling 204,000 copies of her sophomore album, "Feels Like Home," last week, but it is pop pinup girl Jessica Simpson who has grabbed the industry's attention.

Page 19

CTC plays 'safe' in PTI deal

Verizon purchase application to go through settlement proceedings

By RAFFY H. ARROYO
BUSINESS EDITOR



The Commonwealth Telecommunications Commission has decided on a more deliberate approach in disposing of Pacific Telecom Inc.'s plan to purchase Verizon's local operations, so as not to rush a decision that could be problematic for the CNMI in the future.

In an opinion and order issued yesterday, the commissioners preferred to dispose of the case through a settlement process where all issues of concern could be formally deliberated on and addressed

'Governor willing to thresh out issues'

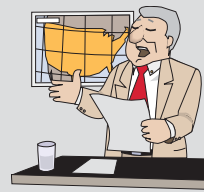
By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Gov. Juan N. Babauta is willing to come to the bargaining table in connection with the decision of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Commission to have a settlement process in the proposed Verizon purchase.

"with the public interest in mind."

"This is a tough decision. We must get it right from the outset," said the three

Assistant Attorney General James Livingstone, who represents Babauta as intervenor in the pending application for approval of the Verizon deal before the CTC, said the governor would support the transaction



once certain concerns are addressed during the settlement process.

"The governor looks forward to discussing all the unanswered questions about PTI's [Pacific Telecom Inc.] application and hopefully resolving them," Livingstone said.

Babauta has raised concerns about
See GOVERNOR on Page 8

commissioners, underscoring the critical nature of the telecommunications system to the islands' future.

PTI had set out years ago to purchase Verizon's Saipan service, Micronesian
See CTC on Page 8



JOHN RAVELO

WHO'S GOING TO CLEAN THIS UP?

Less than a year after the Environmental Interagency Cleanup Operation Team and volunteer groups removed tons of trash from the old Saipan airport, the area has turned into an illegal dumpsite again. Worse, the DEQ discovered several gallons of ink-like substance spilled at the As Gonno site within the old airport.

NMC gets rid of 'without cause' clause

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas College Board of Regents decided unanimously yesterday to get rid of the "without cause" clause in terminating personnel—more than a year following the controversial termination of 11 NMC personnel in 2002.

The board, headed by chairperson Kimberlyn King-Hinds, approved in a special meeting yesterday the motion "to suspend NMC's 'without cause' clause

in existing and future employment contracts" of personnel.

"It applies to all existing contracts and subsequent contracts," she said.

The board said it was "a friendly move" to all NMC personnel.

The board's legal counsel, former chief justice Jesus Borja, said in his advice that the employees "will definitely not object to it."

Vice chair and finance committee chair Galvin Guerrero indicated that it was a gesture to assure NMC personnel

and the Legislature that NMC follows due process.

He noted, though, that the board is opposed to a Senate proposal that aims to put the college under the Civil Service Commission to protect its personnel from employment abuses, including termination without cause.

At the same time, Guerrero said that the Western Association of Schools and Colleges has warned that such legislative proposal would jeopardize NMC's

See NMC on Page 8

Aranza's contract was sole sourced

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The contract to prepare the CNMI's homeland security strategic plan, which was awarded to the firm of former Office of Insular Affairs director Danny Aranza, was sole-sourced, based on documents obtained from the government.

See ARANZA on Page 8

Local

NMC board excludes Gateway from budget request

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas College Board of Regents voted yesterday to exclude from its fiscal year 2005 budget proposal a supplemental funding for the Pacific Gateway project.

The board, in approving the motion, acknowledged “the lack of numbers” as to the student enrolment for Gateway, which starts in fall this year.

Board vice chair and finance committee chairman Galvin

Guerrero said it would be better to handle the Gateway funding separately, especially since the college remains in the process of finalizing the figures for the fall enrolment.

“We’re working with recruiters to see how many students are actually coming for fall. It’s difficult to come forward later and ask for funding just because our budget request didn’t match the actual student enrolment,” he said.

Besides, he said that Gateway is projected to be “self-

sustaining.” He was quick to add, though, that NMC would still need funding for the project upfront.

The college board is submitting to the Legislature over \$9 million as its proposed budget for FY 2005.

Guerrero said NMC would know its international student enrolment by end of May. Gateway students’ deadline for applications is May 31, while the payment deadline is July 1.

NMC would need some \$2 million for additional personnel

to handle 470 additional students under the program.

The college said it needs 46 faculty members to teach additional students on the first year of Gateway. Each faculty is budgeted at \$44,500.

The NMC board said it remains committed to pursuing the Pacific Gateway despite the college’s serious financial condition and the resignation of its main proponent, former NMC president Kenneth E. Wright.

The board said NMC can begin the project using the existing

NMC campus in As Terlaje.

The college entered last year into a \$7.5-million purchase contract of the La Fiesta mall in San Roque mainly for the Gateway program. It has no money yet to renovate the whole complex.

NMC said it would need \$10 million to renovate the La Fiesta mall and to buy needed equipment. NMC hopes to get financing through local agencies and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Fitch IBCA releases BBB-rating for CPA

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

International rating agency Fitch IBCA Ratings affirmed Friday the BBB- rating on the \$18.2-million Commonwealth Ports Authority airport revenue bonds, with firm assurance of the port’s liquid position.

The rating, however, remains on Rating Watch Negative.

In a statement released Friday by the Fitch IBCA, it stated that the rating watch negative reflects the airport’s downward trend in enplanement at the Saipan International Airport due to a series of events in the past three years.

“The Rating Watch Negative reflects the airport’s downward trend stemming from a series of events over the past three years including the worldwide economic recession, the events of Sept 11, 2001, the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, and the initiation of hostilities in Iraq that resulted in a significant decline in airport revenues and the authority’s inability to comply with the 1.25 coverage rate covenant related to its outstanding bonds,” the Fitch IBCA statement release stated.

But the rating agency stressed that these concerns are being offset by the preservation of the authority’s liquid position during this period; the marked improvement in the authority’s finances during fiscal year 2003 due to increased tourism activity and the implementation of cost reduction measures; and the authority’s decision to implement a passenger facility charge expected to start in early 2005 that should enable the authority to restore compliance with the rate covenant.

“Fitch will maintain the Rating Watch Negative until the authority receives approval of its PFC application from the Federal Aviation Administration and initiates collections of this critical revenue source. Fitch also notes the importance of the authority’s cash reserves to its financial performance

over the past two years, which highlights the necessity of strong liquidity levels to counteract the cyclical nature of the local tourist-based economy,” the statement said.

The report added that the sensitivity of the Commonwealth’s tourism industry to local and worldwide economic events was exemplified in fiscal 2002, as enplanement declined 13.7 percent from fiscal 2001. As a result, total airport operating revenue declined by 11 percent in fiscal 2002 from fiscal 2001, with the authority recording a \$560,000 operating deficit for the year.

“However, the authority’s sound liquidity levels allowed it to make scheduled debt service payments on time and in full from its cash reserves, leaving the debt service reserve intact,” the report said.

The report further explained that the competitive nature of the local tourism market, combined with the prominent role of price-sensitive packaged tour operators that direct most Asian tourist traffic, contributed to the authority’s reluctance to raise airline fees to address the revenue shortfall.

Instead, the authority instituted a series of cost cutting measures during fiscal 2003 that resulted in a 7 percent, or \$1.1 million, reduction in operating expenses between fiscal 2002 and 2003.

The cost reductions combined with the authority’s improved operating performance, including a 4-percent increase in enplanement due to heightened tourism activity, eliminated the operating deficit in fiscal 2003.

The authority’s ability to enhance its cash reserves as it continues its recovery represents an essential element to the maintenance of the authority’s investment grade rating.

The authority’s \$4.5 million in unencumbered cash and equivalents, in addition to the debt service reserve, provides an adequate level of liquidity to assure debt service payments in the short-term.

bog

Senate supports Seman’s nomination

Senate President Joaquin G. Adriano is rallying behind the appointment of Fish and Wildlife Director Richard Seman as Department of Lands and Natural Resources secretary—the post vacated by Tom B. Pangelinan who resigned last month.

Gov. Juan N. Babauta yesterday officially notified the Senate of Seman’s appointment.

“Mr. Seman is the perfect man to serve as DLNR secretary. All along, he has been with the Fish and Wildlife. I support Mr. Seman to be the next secretary of DLNR. It’s right timing that we have a young person in there to oversee and take a look at the needs of the agency,” Adriano said yesterday.

He volunteered that other senators, who were present when the governor disclosed the planned appointment last week, are also supporting the nomination.

In the appointment letter to the Senate, the governor expressed confidence that Seman is “qualified to fulfill the vital responsibilities of this office.” Babauta also said that the nominee will be an asset to the administration.

The Office of the Governor, through Special Assistant for Political and Regional Affairs Bertha C. Leon Guerrero, is poised to forward to the Senate copies of Seman’s resumé, statement of financial interest and drug test receipt.

Seman currently serves as acting DLNR chief. He assumed the post to fill in for Pangelinan who resigned on the heels of a controversy relating to the Kagman farm leases.

Pangelinan, who left office on Feb. 17, had received an order from Babauta instructing him to rescind farm termination notices and to stop further issuance of such orders to farm leaseholders “without fact-specific reasons.”

The then DLNR chief argued that concerned farmers had violated permit regulations and said that the governor’s order was “unfair and one-sided.”

Pangelinan, in his reply letter, said that if the governor’s order was not rescinded by Feb. 13, he had no alternative but to resign. The governor did not budge.

Pangelinan justified that the “non-renewal” of four farm leases was due to alleged violations of contract terms of two holders, and size reduction and “right-sizing” of plots by the department.

The affected farm leases belong to permit holders Juan S. Torres, Sam Rayburn, Frank Castro, and Oscar Camacho.

Pangelinan said Torres abandoned the plot and Rayburn had “illegally tapped” into the irrigation system.

He said Castro’s farm must be reduced to create two farm plots, while Camacho’s plot would be divided into two for experimental and school farming.

The farmers, meantime, cried harassment, lack of consultation, and lack of attention to their needs, including that for a reliable irrigation system.

Rayburn and Camacho had also said that the downsizing of farm plots no longer subscribes to the principle of “commercial farming.”

The farmers also said that the DLNR could not unilaterally decide on the redistribution of farm plots since it is a project by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

They said that the USDA project is a long partnership for commercial farming, which provided for “automatic” renewal of permits. (*Marian A. Maraya*)

Establishments found violating regulations governing used oil

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The Division of Environmental Quality discovered that several establishments on Saipan have been improperly handling used oil within their facilities.

DEQ spokesperson Florence S. Calvo said the agency conducted inspections on at least 13 facilities since the beginning March.

Calvo said some of these facilities violated the CNMI Used Oil Management Regulation.

She did not name any of these establishments when asked yesterday. The establishments that were inspected included auto and heavy equipment shops, garment factories, hotels and golf courses, and even government facilities.

Representatives from the DEQ’s Pesticide Above/Underground Storage Tank and Pesticide Management and Site Assessment Remediation branches conducted the inspections, she said.

Terrence Fitial, manager of the storage tank management branch, warned that violators would be dealt with.

“The whole purpose of the used oil inspections is to ensure that individuals and regulated facilities are complying with the used oil management regulation and to also monitor the number of used oil being generated as well as the options of disposal being practiced,” Fitial reportedly said.

Calvo explained that violators would first be warned so that they could do corrective actions within a deadline. Once these

establishments fail to comply with the regulations after the expiration of the deadline, she said the facilities would be issued notices of violations.

The regulations became effective Sept. 1 last year. Calvo said DEQ gave regulated facilities six months—or until Feb. 2004—to comply with the regulations before the agency implements them.

Typical violations include the failure by the establishments generating over 55 gallons of used oil at a given time to notify the DEQ about the activity, Calvo said. Another is the failure to construct containment berms for used oil storage.

Calvo urged those who might have questions on the regulations to contact the DEQ at 664-8500 to 01.

Erosion control manual in the works

The Division of Environmental Quality and the Guam Environmental Protection Agency will meet today with representatives of various local agencies and private contractors in connection with developing a stormwater and erosion control manual for the CNMI and Guam.

About 30 to 50 participants

are expected to attend the meeting at the Pacific Islands Club from 9am to 2:30pm, according to DEQ environmental engineer Brian Bearden.

He said the DEQ and the Guam EPA would solicit recommendations from the public and private representatives for the drafting of the manual.

Agencies that would send representatives to meeting include the departments of Public Works and Lands and Natural Resources, Commonwealth Ports Authority, Marianas Public Lands Authority, Coastal Resources Management Office, and Saipan Mayor’s Office, among others. (*John Ravelo*)

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cmyk

cars unlimited
3/10

COMMUNITY

Briefs

Cancer Survivors support group meeting today

The Cancer Survivors support group will have a meeting today, March 16, 6pm, at the Hyatt Regency Saipan's Chinese Restaurant.

OES report card day today

The acting principal of Oleai Elementary School said that the school's 3rd quarter Report Card Day will be today, March 16, from 4pm to 6pm, which means that there will be no classes. Parents and guardians are highly encouraged to pick up their child(ren)'s report card and meet with their teachers and also join them for the Academic Fair in the cafeteria.

No classes today at KES

Koblerville Elementary School is reminding parents and guardians of its students that there will be no school today, March 16, and on March 24. March 16 is staff development day for teachers. March 24 is the Covenant Day holiday.

HJHS report card day set

Hopwood Junior High School said that the school's 3rd Quarter Report Card Day will be on Tuesday, March 23, from 3:30pm until 6:30pm. Parents and guardians are reminded to proceed to their student's homeroom to pick up his/her report card. Counselors and administrators will be available for additional support.

"If you are unable to come on this day, you may pick up your child's report card starting Wednesday, March 24, from his/her counselor. Please call the school at 664-5075 if you have any questions," the school said in a statement.

KagES report card day today

The Kagman Elementary School will have its Report Card Day today, March 16, Report cards will be issued at 9am-11am and 1pm-4pm.

Parents and guardians are being reminded that report cards will only be issued during these designated hours. Report cards will be released to parents/guardians only.

"Please remember that there are no classes for students today. It is an Administrative Day for KagES Teachers & Staff," the school said in a statement.

Women's forum set

Rep. Janet U. Maratita is hosting a forum at Pacific Island Club on March 18, 11:30am-2 pm, in recognition of CNMI women for the month of March.

All women are invited to participate in this forum to share ideas, meet new friends, unite and continue to work together in promoting women's interest.

Interested participants are asked to call the Women's Affairs Office at 664-2294/5 or Maratita's office at 664-8965 for reservation. Please call by Monday, March 22nd to confirm your participation.

Tinian to host agri-fair

The Tinian Agricultural and Food Fair Inc. will be holding a Mini-Agricultural and Food Fair on May 28-29, a Friday and a Saturday, at the San Isidro Fiesta Ground on Tinian.

All farmers are invited to participate in the agriculture and food fair competition. Categories in the competition are Produce and Ornamental Plants, Livestock, and Food.

The general public is also invited.

For more details, contact Dir. Ray Cing, Chairman at 433 9293/4339298; Dir. Joe Cruz , Vice-Chair at 433 3422; Dr. Allan Castro Sabaldica, Secretary at 4332576/ 287 0556.

Environment prize seeks nominees

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes is seeking nominations for its 2004 awards. The Barron Prize recognizes young people ages 8 to 18 who have shown leadership and courage in public service to people and our planet. Half of each year's winners are chosen for their work to protect the environment. Winners receive \$2,000 to support their service work or higher education.

Nomination deadline is April 30, 2004. For more information and to nominate, visit www.barronprize.org. Barbara Ann Richman Program Director Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes PO BOX 17 Boulder, CO 80306 (970) 875-1448 www.barronprize.org

1040 Form distribution set

The Division of Revenue and Taxation wishes to inform all CNMI residents that the distribution of the 2003 1040 forms and instruction has already begun. Those who would like to pick up a copy can drop by at the Office of the Division of Revenue and Taxation located at the DanDan Commercial Center from 8am to 4pm.

All residents are asked to pick up the forms during regular business hours. Please be reminded that the deadline for filing 2003 1040 is Thursday, April 15, 2004 at 12am (midnight).

DES raffle draw postponed to May

The Dandan Elementary School has postponed its 6th Annual Cultural Day Raffle Drawing and Festivities from Feb. 14 to May 22.

"We apologize for the inconvenience this has brought upon the parents and others who have made efforts to participate in this school function. On behalf of the administration, teachers, parents, students, and the PTA officers of their school community, we thank you for your understanding and continued support in every way possible," said the school in a media statement.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE MARCH 1, 2004											
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Funding for Falipe road repairs OK'd

Gov. Juan N. Babauta signed into law yesterday an appropriation measure that directs \$100,000 for Falipe road improvements, despite a new Office of Insular Affairs 702 CIP policy that advises against such action.

Although offering his support behind the road repairs in Precinct 3, the chief executive implied slight reservation over approving the measure amid OIA's new policy pertaining to the proposed reappropriation of 702 CIP matching funds from completed and closed projects.

Banking Code public hearing rescheduled

The House Committee on Commerce and Tourism has moved the public hearing on the proposed Commonwealth Banking Code of 2004 to March 30, Tuesday, due to conflicting schedules.

The hearing is set for 2pm at the House Chamber.

The office of committee chairman Ray Yumul said yesterday that the panel is still waiting for different agencies to submit testimonies on House Bill 14-66.

The proposed legislation, offered by Yumul, essentially aims to update the existing banking code in the Commonwealth. It specifically seeks to repeal and reenact 4 CMC Division 6, Chapters 1 through 8, sections 6101 through 6814.

"The new law will provide additional protection for both depositors and Commonwealth financial institutions. It will also widen the scope of ownership of Commonwealth banks and simplify the administrative pro-

cedures associated with the licensing and operation of banks incorporated and/or registered in the Commonwealth," the "Purpose" section of HB 14-66 reads.

The bill is 56 pages long.

For the hearing, the commerce and tourism committee has summoned the presence of Attorney General Pam Brown, acting Finance Secretary Fermin Atalig, acting Commerce Secretary Jesse Palacios, Commonwealth Development Authority chairman Sixto Igisomar, Saipan Bankers Association president Stephen Brock and Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Alex Sablan.

The witnesses have been asked to submit written testimonies as regards their position on HB 14-66.

The House panel also welcomed members of the general public to submit written or oral testimonies. *(Marian A. Maraya)*

He expressed confidence that

this collaboration between Legislature and Executive Branch officials will ensure adherence to the new OIA policy.

The governor indicated, however, that the \$100,000 will not be released until the \$400,000 is appropriated.

The administration further warned that it will no longer entertain future legislation that does not conform to the new OIA policy requiring that projects have a minimum value of \$500,000 in order to gain approval.

Babauta, in the meantime, asked that the Legislature coordinate with the administration's CIP managers to make sure that the supplemental funds are appropriated as soon as possible.

House Bill 14-72 is now docketed as Public Law 14-1.

The measure reappropriates \$100,000 from Section 2(3) of Public Law 13-10 as previously appropriated for the construction of an overpass between the Commonwealth Health Center and Garapan Elementary School to cover the shortfall for the Falipe road paving, drainage and survey costs.

The legislation was crafted amid the urgency to rid the Chinatown and Falipe areas of damaged roads with potholes, debris and overflowing septic tanks that, as a result, flood homes.

"These conditions provide an unsanitary living condition for the residents of China Town and Falipe. To minimize current problems encountered by the residents of these areas, especially during the rainy season, it is important that the \$100,000 be reprogrammed to the Falipe road paving and drainage project to enable the Department of Works to complete this project," said the House Committee on Ways and Means in its Standing Committee Report 14-1.

According to the House, the reprogramming of funds will reduce government cost on rental, coral and man hours, provide safety to the general public, provide control of the water runoff, and provide clean environment. *(Marian A. Maraya)*



Two men arrested for disturbance

Two men were arrested in Chalan Piao for allegedly causing a disturbance in their neighborhood Sunday night police said yesterday.

Police department spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said a complaint was lodged with the police around 11pm after residents heard George Camacho, 27, and Rimirch Kladikm, 47, fighting.

According to reports, the two were part of a group of men who had been drinking since early Sunday night.

Near the end of their drinking spree, Camacho allegedly fought with Kladikm.

Witnesses at the scene also filed complaints against Kladikm for disturbing the peace. The complainants said Kladikm has been causing a disturbance since Friday, March 12.

They alleged that Kladikm always create a commotion whenever he is intoxicated, walking around the neighborhood, shouting and constantly asking for money in the early morning hours.

Responding police officers arrested the two and brought them to the adult correctional facility in Susupe where they were detained. *(Edith G. Alejandro)*

Woman arrested for theft

A 36-year-old woman was arrested after allegedly stealing several items from the Duty Free Shoppers Galleria in Garapan Saturday, police said yesterday.

According to police reports, Ji Young Kim allegedly stole two Space Port pen packs, a Roxy key chain, two toy key chain recorders, a fish key chain, and Lego Belville watches, all amounting to \$122.

The report said the suspect was observed through the surveillance camera as she entered the Louis Vuitton section with the items on one hand and a plastic bag in the other.

Moments later, she came out with the items already gone from her hand. She still had the plastic bag, though. Later on, the suspect was seen allegedly taking another item from the shelf and walking out of the store.

DFS security officers approached the suspect and invited her in for questioning.

The suspect allegedly admitted stealing the items, which were recovered from inside the bag she was carrying. The suspect was charged with theft and transported to the Division of Corrections. *(Edith G. Alejandro)*

CUC

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Haiti's 'new chapter'

Though he bitterly disappointed Haitians who hoped he would bring democracy and development to the hemisphere's poorest country, Jean-Bertrand Aristide in the end made the right decision. Rather than make a last stand in his capital, he accepted the offer of an American plane trip to exile and opened the way for a U.S.-led international force to end the anarchy overtaking the country. History will likely judge that Mr. Aristide was mostly responsible for his own downfall: He presided over a corrupt government that regularly used violence against its opponents and eventually provoked a violent uprising. But his flight to exile Sunday was forced by the Bush administration, which refused to support international intervention or commit U.S. forces until after Mr. Aristide capitulated. President Bush's declaration Sunday that "the Haitian constitution is working" offered scant cover for the reality that his decisions over the past two weeks had led to the departure of an elected president.

Whether the downfall of Mr. Aristide leads to "a new chapter" and "a hopeful future" for Haiti, as Mr. Bush suggested Sunday, will depend in large measure on how the United States conducts its latest intervention in the country. As a first step, U.S. forces, which were to begin arriving Sunday night, must stop the looting and lawlessness in Port-au-Prince and other cities, and they must ensure that the violent gangs roaming the country—both pro and anti-Aristide—are disarmed and disbanded. Leaders of the armed rebel groups include criminals and former paramilitary operatives from the military dictatorship that preceded Mr. Aristide; they must not be allowed to seize a share of power. Instead, the United States and allies in the Organization of American States and in the Caribbean Community should help to establish a transitional government and organize new democratic elections as soon as possible.

There is much to be learned from the last U.S. effort at stabilizing Haiti a decade ago. U.S. forces left too quickly, and they provided too little training and aid to the police they left behind. Not enough was done to help Haitians build democratic institutions. When Mr. Aristide's party manipulated the results of a congressional election, the United States suspended all further aid to his government, blocked some other development assistance, and delegated the job of finding a political solution to OAS and Caribbean diplomats with little or no leverage.

Without a more concerted effort at nation-building—comparable to that which the United States has supported in the Balkans, or Iraq—the pattern of crisis and foreign intervention in Haiti will not be broken. So far, the administration's approach offers scant grounds for optimism. As the crisis mounted over the past several months, U.S. officials ignored it until violence had spread across the country. Even when it became clear that foreign intervention would be necessary, the administration tried to hand the problem off to France or Canada. Only over the weekend did Mr. Bush finally accept what should have been obvious from the beginning: that the United States must lead any rescue of Haiti.

Now that the Marines are once again to be in Port-au-Prince, we can only hope that Mr. Bush will make a large enough commitment of U.S. resources to ensure that Haiti's next president is democratically chosen—and that he has a fair chance at success.

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Job opening, some English required

Last week, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said he supported a constitutional amendment to allow foreign-born Americans to run for president. At first I was puzzled by his interest in this issue, but then I discovered a little-known fact about the man: He was born in Austria. You'd never know it from hearing him talk, but then he is a highly skilled actor.

And he makes a good point: The U.S. Constitution is full of silly, outdated stuff about separating church and state and not putting you in jail without a trial. It's full of lots of 18th-century slang like "freedom" and "privacy."

And one of the silliest things of all is the part where it says foreigners can't be president. Arnold's right. The problem with presidents today is that they come off as a little too... American. We've got that whole cowboy "bring it on" thing goin'. What we need is a presidency injected with a little sensitivity and worldly sophistication. And who better to deliver that than the grab-and-grope action hero from "Jingle All the Way"? Schwarzenegger mentioned the German-born Henry Kissinger as someone who would have made a great president had the Constitution not been in the way—as if that ever stopped Kissinger.

Quite frankly, I think of foreigners as more educated and more socially progressive when it comes to issues such as abortion, euthanasia, birth control, the environment, religion, marriage, materialism, nuclear disarmament, poverty, human rights and life on Earth as we know it. They generally speak at least two languages and have, by definition, traveled outside the United States.

They're also less likely to wear spurs and a 4-foot-tall lime-green Styrofoam cowboy hat to an international conference and call everybody they meet there "Shooter!" Foreigners can't run for president? I believe only foreigners should run for president.

American presidents are like American beer—bland, watered down and advertised to us as if we're morons. They come from boring places like Hope, Ark., Yorba Linda, Calif., and that town in Texas where President Bush was born: New Haven, Conn.

Face it, the presidency is a lousy job. And who does lousy jobs we don't want anymore better than foreigners?

The guy we've got doing it now works only part time. He spends half the day raising money from mining companies and the other

By **BILL MAHER**
Los Angeles Times

Maher is host of HBO's "Real Time with Bill Maher."



half telling schoolchildren that al-Qaida wants them dead, and he's in bed by 7!

The average Frenchman knows more geography than we do. The average Japanese knows more math. And the average Guatemalan is already here, cleaning your house and taking care of your kids. If we can trust them with our children, why not the White House? They can run it and clean it.

As a history buff, I've noticed that of all the worst presidents in U.S. history, every single one of them was an American. Doesn't anyone see a pattern here? Nixon, Carter, Hoover—down the line—Thomas E. Dewey, all native-born Americans. Which only goes to show that sometimes ethnic profiling ... well, sometimes it's just a matter of common sense.

Just once I'd like my president, the nation's president, to be like one of those presidents Italy always has, with the expensive suits and the permanent tan and the Versace mistress, and there's photos of them canoodling on a boat but nobody cares because hey, that's "amore." Our guy gets impeached. In Italy, the stock market goes up.

It comes down to this: British people just sound better than we do. When they ask Tony Blair about weapons of mass destruction, the stuff he pulls out of his hat always sounds so much better than the stuff Bush pulls out of his hat. We're Americans, don't we deserve the best?

It's too late to undo the injustice that kept foreign-born presidential timber like Madeleine Albright and William Shatner out of the White House. But think of the future!

The job of president is just too important to be left to an American.

A prisoner in my own home

By **FRANCES ANN D. AMOG**

Do you know what it feels like to be a prisoner in your own home? Ironically, that which you call “home” does not recognize you as its own. You are not a citizen. You are not even considered a resident. You cannot leave for fear of not being allowed to enter upon your return. You have no right to vote in general elections. And, as a student, you are considered “ineligible” to apply for the different scholarships and grants needed for graduating seniors who wish to continue their studies in the U.S. And you cannot partake in all the privileges that are granted to those who hold what you do not—a U.S. passport. In the end, that is the only thing that separates you from everybody else. And that is what keeps you a “prisoner” in your own home.

My name is Frances Ann Donato Amog, born on October 31, 1982 on the beautiful island of Saipan, and one of many children recognized as “stateless.” I have lived my whole life on the island, embracing the culture and its people as my own. Saipan is home to me. It is all I have ever known. And it is where I one day hope to raise a family of my own. For so long, I was unaware that the island I call home does not recognize me as its own. During my senior year, the Board of Elections came to school to register all the seniors in the hopes of encouraging youths to exercise our right to vote in the upcoming general elections. Instead of filling out a form so that I could partake in the elections,

I sat back and watched my friends fill out theirs because I was deemed ineligible to vote. I could not participate in an event that would determine the direction the island was headed in the near future. I could not participate in voting for those who I know in my heart would do a great job. I knew those who ran for offices. I grew up watching them around the island. I went to school with their children. Yet I was still ineligible. It is a lonely feeling filled with despair when I finally realized how different I was.

In addition to that, I could not travel abroad. While my friends headed off to the states for family vacations, I spent every summer I knew on the island, enjoying all that the island offered. I attended the annual carnival and saw movies with friends. I watched the parade every Fourth of July with my family. I could not even travel to Guam for fear of not being allowed to enter because of my status, and the even bigger fear of not being able to return home. I felt as though I were being punished for something I had no control over, for something borne out of circumstance. I was not allowed to leave, or to ever step foot off the island, because there was always the risk of not being able to return home even though I was born there.

And lastly, as a “stateless” child, I lost any chance to further my studies in the U.S. despite having graduated at the top of my class. I worked so hard throughout high school, maintaining an A-average, hoping that I would have the chance to study in the states. During my senior year, I began looking at several colleges and universities in the States, namely Gonzaga University and Seattle University in

Washington. However, when attempting to apply for scholarships and grants, I noticed that every single one required U.S. citizenship, which I did not have. The only thing I was eligible for was a foreign student financial aid. I was heartbroken. I had such high hopes to attend college in the U.S. but I couldn’t. On graduation night, I walked away with several awards and no scholarship or grant. I should have been one of the first off to college, but instead, I watched my friends and classmates embark on their own journey, each filled with excitement. I was engulfed in a sea of loneliness because I noticed the uncertainty of my future due to the circumstances that surrounded my status.

I try so hard not to let my “status” and all the missed opportunities I’ve encountered get the best of me. I try not to focus on the fact that my home, in retrospect, has refused me as its own. I look away from graduation night and all that I could have been and look at all the possibilities instead. All I wanted was to take all the knowledge I wish to learn in a good university, and bring it back home. Bring it back to a place I hold dear to me, back home to the island of Saipan. However, I can’t leave. Yet, I can’t partake in events such as general elections that may very well affect me. This is what it feels like to be a prisoner in your own home. This is what it feels like to be “stateless.”

Frances graduated valedictorian from the Mount Carmel School in 2000. She lives in San Antonio with her parents, Isabelita and Pablito Amog.

So much irony in this Passion

By **PAUL RICHARD**

Special to The Washington Post

If Protestant Americans, diverse as they are, can be said to share a symbol, it has to be the clean-cut cross of Jesus they so liberally display. Hallmark puts it on cards, churches set it atop spires, celebrities hang it in their bling-bling. It’s out there in our image-world, standing crisp and white. Like other symbols, it is a weapon, and it has a history.

There are mysteries in its meanings, but not in its look. Its look is obvious: The whiteness stands for purity; the brightness for the Light. And that exact rectilinearity, 90 degrees, right on, points toward God, because it’s perfect. This cross is not the crucifix of the Roman Catholic church. No Jesus hangs on it. He’s already resurrected. No nail holes, no adze-marks, no gall-and-vinegar stains soil this immaculate abstraction. It’s no more of flesh than a diagram in a book of geometry. It’s been cleansed. It’s been washed of blood.

What hasn’t been washed of blood, what bathes in it, is “The Passion of the Christ,” which may be the bloodiest movie ever. Blood gets so much screen time in Mel Gibson’s film—for its oozings and its spurtings and its smearing of the wall—that it becomes the picture’s star. “The Passion” is a torture flick, intentionally Baroque. Its look comes less from Scripture than it does from Counter-Reformation painting.

These two visions have competed through the centuries. The Protestant Reformation stripped the cross clean. Counter-Reformation art answered by pulling out all the visual stops to defend the Catholic Church while confounding the Protestants’ aesthetics. The paintings Gibson imitates shared a propagandistic purpose. They were weapons in the wars between Protestants and Catholics that swept through Northern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. And these weren’t merely culture wars. They were sword-and-cannon battles in which countless people died.

And yet American evangelicals and fundamentalists—the Reformation’s children—are flocking to see “The Passion of the Christ.” The Rev. Billy Graham has called Gibson’s film “a lifetime of sermons in one movie,” though the difference, a big one, is that sermons come in words while movies do their work through the viewer’s eye. Protestants around the country are buying blocks of tickets. Out in Santa Rosa, Calif., a pastor named Andy Vom Steeg has sent out 10,000 postcards asking people in the region to see the Gibson movie and discuss it at his church.

All of which seems a little curious, and not just art-historically. There’s been an aesthetic flip: Hard-core, clean-cross Protestants would once have been appalled, en masse, by the Counter-Reformation style and its message. Now many lap it up.

Gibson’s action may be set in 1st-century Jerusalem, but his style comes from 17th-century Rome.

Special-effect skies, gleams from brass and leather, swirling darks and lights, heart-rending emoting—Rome’s militantly Catholic painters, and their peers in Spain and Flanders, went straight for the gut, and did so through the viewer’s responding eye. Gibson does the same. His Mary and Magdalene, shown in tear-streaked close-ups gazing dolorously upward, look just like Guido Reni’s. And when Gibson calls his film “a moving Caravaggio” it is because its swirlings, its gritty realism, its dark palette, and its scenes side-lit by torches come straight from Caravaggio’s paintings. In the 1950s, Hollywood’s Jesuses sported spotless white cashmere robes and shampooed hair, but Caravaggio dressed his figures in rags of sober hue. So does Gibson. Gibson needs these references because his movie is so gory. There is only so much you can do to hurt human flesh, but when the film has done enough, it does a whole lot more. The artiness is there to soften our disgust. Over his movie’s bloodiness Gibson has poured the sort of golden glow that rises through the yellowed varnish of Old Master paintings. And beneath his gore he shows us the many ripe conventions of Counter-Reformation art.

Martin Luther’s Reformation was a theological rebellion. At its core was a refusal. No longer would the rebels accept the pope in Rome, or the hierarchy he led, or the Latin of the Mass and of the Vulgate Bible, which most of them could neither read nor understand. If they themselves could read the Bible (which Luther soon began to translate into German), they could find their way to God with the aid of faith alone. They didn’t need the pope, they didn’t need his saints, they didn’t need his priests, and—as some began insisting—they didn’t need his art.

The more the reformers valorized the Word, the more they turned away from images. The most extreme among them—the “image-breakers,” the iconoclasts—saw it as their duty to smash the sensual power—the scary, popish power—they sensed in Catholic art.

For the Pilgrims of East Anglia, the Huguenots of France, and the Calvinists of the Netherlands, Counter-Reformation art smacked of popishness, idolatry, unrestrained excess. They knew what the Counter-Reformation was counter to—it was counter to them. Its art, they understood, was devised to dent their scruples and to undo their aesthetic. They did not take it lying down.

On Aug. 10, 1566, at Steenvoorde in Flanders, a Calvinist preacher named Sebastian Matte told his listeners to go and smash the art in Catholic churches. Ten days afterward, the cathedral at Antwerp was methodically trashed (though later, under Catholic rule, Rubens was commissioned to re-do its splendor).

Such spasms of enthusiastic image-breaking erupted in the British Isles for most of the next century. “Lord, what work was here!” lamented the Bishop of Norwich in 1647. “What clattering of glasses! What beating down of walls!”

Think of all art destroyed, the statues with their heads knocked off, the broken stained-glass windows. Think of all the churches, especially in the Netherlands, with their murals whitewashed out.

Hatred was involved, of course, in destructions such as these. Class issues, and politics, and imperial disputes were also much in play, but so, too, was a scruple as old as monotheism—a fear of basely materializing the ungraspable Divine.

Most of the Protestant image-breakers, busily whitewashing and smashing, were confident that they had Scripture on their side. In Exodus 20, after all, God is pretty specific: “Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” And Jesus was cited, too: “Blessed are they,” he tells us in John 20:29, “that have not seen and yet have believed.”

If American Protestantism can be said to have a visual style, this preference for the cleansed, the stripped-down, the ascetic, must be one of its chief strands. That plainness is still seen in the clean, white clapboard churches scattered through New England, in the Quaker meeting houses of Pennsylvania, all the way to the Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, Calif. No Catholic paintings taint these sanctuaries. Billy Sunday’s revival tent wasn’t hung with gilded frames. The Little Brown Church in the Vale, famous through song, is a structure without paintings. In Protestant America they’ve been absent from the start.

And now along comes Gibson, returning to center stage the vivid Catholic imagery—sensual, argumentative, Marian and Latinate—of Counter-Reformation art.

He is, no doubt, sincere. But then the Aztec priests who ripped out human hearts were pretty sincere, too. So are the flagellants who still bloody themselves for God in so many Shiite and Spanish-speaking countries. The act of seeking the divine through blood and gruesome suffering didn’t start with Gibson. It must be immensely old.

Many contemporary Protestants will approve of Gibson’s movie, and I bet they won’t be thinking of 17th-century Italian art, or popish propaganda, Calvinist image-breaking, or anything like that. That reviled mainstream Hollywood is taking Scripture seriously will fill their hearts with hope. That Gibson is a Roman Catholic, and a pre-Vatican II traditionalist, will not be held against him. He’s a conservative and a star.

The author has written about art for The Post since 1967.

Wellness symposium on Saturday

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

A coalition of health experts aims to step up its health awareness campaign when various agencies gather in Kagman Elementary School on Saturday to hold a Community Wellness Fair.

Commonwealth Diabetes Coalition-Community Wellness Fair coordinator Jill Vanderkin said in a new briefing yesterday that a collaboration of agencies would be conducting the half-day health fair, which would consist of health sessions, exercises, exhibits, and other health-related activities.

Vanderkin said the health fair would also combine with the Sabalu market and vaccination sessions.

The fair would begin at 8am and would run through 12pm.

"This would be a multiple session fair that we would be doing along with the HeadStart, the Department of Public

Health, and NMC-CREES, among others. There would be mental and dental health and healthy cooking sessions. There would be a concurrent diabetes seminar and round-table discussion," Vanderkin told reporters yesterday.

Also, she disclosed that there would be free child-care services at the Kagman school for the first 50 kids. The HeadStart, Division of Youth Services, and Camp Hyatt would jointly hold the child-care services.

"This is the first combined wellness fair that we would be doing. There have been health symposia and diabetes seminars in the past; this time we decided to bring them in together. We would be conducting a whole new fair that would discuss family wellness issues and how to prevent diabetes. These are activities that the entire family would enjoy," she explained.

Aside from the sessions, there would be booths to be provided by the Com-

monwealth Diabetes Coalition, DPH, Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, HeadStart Program, NMC-CREES, Children's Development Assistance Center, American Red Cross-NMI Chapter, Gold's Gym, Herman's Modern Bakery, Farmers Association, Micronesian Brokers, and Parents as Teachers.

The organizations would be giving out samples and leaflets about different issues to help participants understand healthy living and prevention of diseases.

With the theme "Get a Head Start on Health: Eat Smart, Live Healthy," the Community Wellness Fair would try to answer several concerns on diabetes, healthy cooking, and stress management, among others.

The Ayuda Network, Red Cross, and NMC-CREES will co-sponsor the program.

CTC

From Page 1

Telecommunications Corp., but has met a tough approval process.

"If we approve the sale to the 'wrong' purchaser, the system will likely degrade over time and consumers will suffer while we struggle to 'fix' the situation."

It added that whatever decision CTC comes up with must rely on facts and judgment, and not merely on opinion and good intentions.

PTI's proponent in Manila, Ricardo Delgado Jr., and Verizon general manager Tony Mosley were emailed for comment but no response was received as of press time.

The 12-page opinion and order came on the heels of an earlier opinion and order issued by the commissioners admitting the Governor and the Consumer Counsel as "intervenor" or rightful parties that have an interest in the PTI-MTC proceedings.

This gave Gov. Juan N. Babauta and Consumer Counsel Brian Caldwell legal standing to bring up their concerns about the application, taking consumer interest into consideration, subject to limitations.

Babauta has repeatedly opposed the PTI-MTC deal, saying it is not in the best interest of the people of the CNMI. He, however, said he would be ready to support it "if all issues, questions, and concerns have been adequately answered and addressed."

The commission, in its opinion and order, appointed one of its counsels, Sean Frink, as settlement hearing offi-

cer whose duty is to carry out the letter and intent of the opinion and order.

Frink was also authorized to engage in *ex parte* or exclusive contacts among the parties toward the development of a stipulation for settlement that would then be presented to the commission for action.

The CTC is of the belief that the applicants have not yet met the burden of proof and that the evidence to support such a key decision has not been provided to address certain issues.

"There are also many questions left unanswered, and too many ambiguities and unclear matters for us to commit the CNMI to the proposed new telecom system owner at this time," the order read.

The commission, however, clarified that it has neither approved nor rejected the PTI-MTC venture, although the alleged failure of PTI to show it could meet the requirements for acquiring and managing the CNMI's telecom system could have elicited a denial of the application.

"We will not approve a deal so critical to the future of the CNMI on the hope that the parties' best intentions will produce high quality telecommunications service at reasonable rates," said the commissioners.

One of the issues raised by the CTC was the current telecom provider's handling of the inter-island toll issue, which it said should have been addressed in writing when MTC pursued a deal involving the installation of its fiber-optic undersea cable years back.

But the commission said judgment must be made on the totality of the information provided "on an evidentiary record consisting of sworn, verifiable testimony and exhibits."

According to the governor, the Delgados sold their controlling interest in Islacom and exited the market in May 1999, before the Philippine commission granted renewal of Islacom's license.

Livingstone also reiterated the governor's concern to make the deal transparent.

"No one except the applicant knows how this [Verizon purchase] is going to be financed," Livingstone said.

He said that, while PTI had disclosed about a loan from the Development Bank of Singapore, no loan and other financial documents have been produced.

"The telecommunications system is the most important infrastructure in the CNMI. If you don't have the phone

"Promises or conditions must be crystal clear. Otherwise, we face the potential repeat of the unhappy inter-island toll controversy, in which some of the CNMI's leading citizens claim that the word of the MTEC leadership was given that there would be no inter-island toll charges, while MTC claims that no one gave such assurances, nor would they.

"In particular, if an approval of a purchase were to be made on conditions, we would have to determine how to make those conditions enforceable as a practical matter," a portion of the order read.

The commission said it decided to initiate parallel settlement discussions partly so that the parties may be able to resolve relatively quickly matters that would otherwise be subject to lengthy, complex evidentiary proceedings.

CTC noted it has considered the PTI-MTC matter only for 189 days, which it said was well below state and national standards. It, however, said it would try to operate in an expeditious manner as is reasonably possible.

The commission, currently made up of Norman Tenorio, Josephine Mesta and J. Michael Fitzgerald, was established under Public Law 12-39 to regulate all telecommunications in the CNMI and administer and ensure compliance to the Act.

It has jurisdiction over transfers and capitalization over any person or corporation with a direct or indirect interest in such services or companies.

The PTI-MTC purchase deal had obtained the required U.S. nod from the Federal Communications Commission, but is awaiting local approval from CTC prior to issuance of a license to do business in the Northern Marianas.

system right, you don't have the economy," Livingstone said.

Livingstone also said the governor would like to know specific plans by PTI, covering phone rates, inter-island tolls, expansion, and rate integration with the U.S. mainland.

Babauta wants to make sure that the current rate integration that allows U.S.-mainland rates for calls within the country continues once the sale of Verizon to PTI is approved by the CTC, according to Livingstone.

The Governor had earlier expressed concern about PTI's ability to maintain Verizon's rate integration with its U.S. operating affiliates because the purchaser has no U.S. mainland operations.

Registration open for arts fest

The Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture will be holding the 23rd Annual Flame Tree Arts Festival on April 16, 17 and 18, 2004 at the American Memorial Park-west of Bell Tower.

Registration for booths will be open tomorrow, March 3, from 8am to 4:30pm. and will be closed for registration on April 5, 2004.

The festival includes booths for housing traditional crafts and contemporary artist displaying, selling, and demonstrating their art works. There will be booths for food vendors and some for information purposes only.

The council is also asking the general public—mainly performers and entertainers who are interested to perform at this festival—to call or visit its office on Capital Hill (next to the Post Office) and register.

Registrants will have the opportunity to select a good location for their booth based on a first-come first-served basis and the submission of the payment and necessary documents.

Interested individuals may contact the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs/Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture at 322-9982/83 for more information.

NMC

From Page 1

accreditation with WASC.

NMC is considered an autonomous agency, although it receives annual appropriation from the government.

Guerrero acknowledged that the Senate bill was triggered by the Sept. 2002 termination of 11 personnel "without cause."

The reorganization was carried out by then newly hired president Kenneth

E. Wright. Wright resigned his post last month.

The Senate bill came after terminated NMC program coordinator Jack Angello received a favorable court ruling on Sept. 3, 2003, which allowed the CSC to freely hear his termination appeal against the NMC.

The NMC had contested the commission's jurisdiction over Angello's case in court, but the court said that the college, based on the law, lacks standing to make the petition against the CSC on the issue.

ARANZA

From Page 1

Documents showed that on Aug. 8, 2003, Procurement and Supply director Herman Sablan had certified that the processing of the contract, submitted by Aranza's Federated Sector Enterprises, had been completed.

"You may proceed with contract implementation according to the terms contained therein," said Sablan in an Aug. memorandum addressed to the governor.

Before this, Gov. Juan N. Babauta has asked Sablan in a July 29, 2003, letter to ask for a waiver on certain procurement policies "to expedite the processing of service through sole source procurement."

He justified that the immediate hiring of FSE was urgently needed to assist the government prepare a strategy that will help it secure and avail of potential funding.

"The continued global threat against the U.S. and its territories is a serious matter that our government must prepare to react and prevent from happening... Our government lacks the necessary resources needed to harden and secure these infrastructures, as well as professional people with technical expertise... I have therefore identified a company [FSE] who I feel possess the necessary technical expertise and knowledge," he said.

FSE finished the strategy report and submitted it to the Department of Homeland Security in late January on behalf of the CNMI.

Early this month, some authorities disclosed that portions of the report were "rejected." The governor, however, said that the strategy report only required some revisions.

Some lawmakers, including Senate President Joaquin G. Adriano, Minority Leader Sen. Pete P. Reyes, and Rep. Clyde K. Norita, had expressed opposition to the administration's decision to contract out the

development of the security plan to a private firm.

They said that CNMI government is fully capable of doing the work without FSE.

In justifying the need for acceleration of work, which meant approval of two contract amendments in Oct. 2003, FSE warned that the CNMI would face the threat of losing international cargo shipping and significant federal funding without a credible strategy report.

Aranza, a managing partner of FSE, said the CNMI was time-pressed in accomplishing its compliant security plans.

FSE had submitted two amendments, which called for the release of some \$400,000 from the CNMI to cover travel, labor, material and other costs for its personnel.

FSE said the amount could be sourced from the Emergency Management Office's over-\$5 million grant.

The first amendment, which required \$308,855 funding, was aimed to provide training in the CNMI on the use of the state preparedness equipment program, assessment and strategy development tool kit and various activities in support of helping the CNMI develop and maintain required Department of Homeland Security capabilities associated with physical security threats, public health, agriculture, emergency-response and management, critical utilities and the like.

The second amendment, which required an additional \$108,000, aimed to help the Commonwealth Ports Authority comply with requirements mandated by the DHS, to include those initiatives and regulatory guidelines of the U.S. Coast Guard and Transportation Security Administration.

Prior to this, the government had contracted FSE for \$200,000 to help in the grant submission for CUC and CPA.

The two agencies, which helped shoulder the contract price, reportedly got the grant.

GOVERNOR

From Page 1

the PTI's technical and financial qualifications.

In an earlier letter to the CTC, the governor brought up the alleged failure by PTI's stockholders—the Delgado family—in smoothly running Islacom, a telecommunications firm in the Philippines.

Babauta had also earlier claimed that the Philippines' National Telecommunications Commission had refused to renew Islacom's license at one time due to the company's alleged failure to provide services consistent with the previous license's conditions.

Grants open for summer study in US

The U.S. Department of the Interior is encouraging top high school student leaders, grades 10-11, to apply for one of three full scholarships being offered by the department, to attend a Junior Statesmen Summer

School session in the States. The scholarships cover all tuition costs and round-trip transportation to the summer school of the students' choice. Summer school students take exciting college level courses

in American government and speech, while they develop and polish their leadership skills. Month-long sessions of the Junior Statesmen Summer School are conducted on the prestigious university campuses of Stanford

(near San Francisco), Northwestern (near Chicago), Princeton University (near New York), Yale (near New York) and Georgetown (in Washington, D.C.).

Highlighting each summer school session is a high-level speakers program that gives students a chance to meet and question legislators, other elected officials, judges, reporters, political campaign consultants, and others in the political arena. Each night, summer school students debate controversial political issues in a simulation of the U.S. Congress.

Admission to the summer school is competitive. Admis-

sion decisions are based on an applicant's academic achievement, leadership, and interest in politics or government.

To apply, students submit a copy of their high school grades, a three-page personal essay, and a letter of recommendation from a counselor or teacher.

Tuition, which covers all academic expenses, housing and meals for the month, is \$3,500. Transportation to the school is not included in the tuition.

For 12 years, Interior has offered full tuition and transportation scholarships to the Junior Statesmen Summer School to outstanding high school students

in Guam, the CNMI, the Republic of Belau, the U.S. Virgin Islands and American Samoa at three scholarships per insular area.

In the past twelve years, 269 students from Guam, 225 students from the CNMI, and 125 students from the Republic of Belau have attended the Junior Statesmen Summer School.

The deadline for applications for the scholarships is postmarked by Friday, April 2, 2004 for the CNMI, Guam, and the Republic of Belau. Department of Interior Scholarship decisions are made by the Junior Statesmen Summer Admissions Committee.

Palacios wants ‘unreasonable’ homestead requirements out

Rep. Arnold I. Palacios is pressing for the removal of what he termed as “unreasonable” homesteading requirements imposed by the Marianas Public Lands Authority.

The minority congressman has introduced House Bill 14-128, which seeks to restrict MPLA from establishing any more eligibility requirements, such as income and asset threshold for village homesteads.

“There’s provision in the regulation that disqualifies individuals or household that have an net income of \$70,000. That, I think, is very inappropriate because, ironically, MPLA will issue a homestead permit to an individual and give them three years to construct a dwelling. If this person doesn’t construct a dwelling [within that period] then they will take it away from them.

“They then turn around and disqualify individuals who have

an income of \$70,000, which are basically people who would probably go to a bank and borrow money and construct a dwelling,” Palacios said yesterday.

The Republican lawmaker described the regulation as “contradictory” and tantamount to denying young couples who happen to have relatively good-paying jobs.

“We’re disenfranchising certain people who actually did good, went to school probably and got good jobs. I don’t think that’s appropriate. I think it’s a very contradictory policy.

“Sure, I can see [the logic behind providing] land to those who don’t have land. But you exclude people who can actually get a homestead and actually meet the other requirements in the homesteading regulations,” he argued.

HB 14-128 essentially seeks to restrict MPLA from imposing “unreasonable” homestead-

ing eligibility requirements, e.g. income and asset threshold for village homesteads, by amending Public Law 12-33. (*Marian A. Maraya*)

Cook Islands activist is ‘woman of the year’

RAROTONGA, Cook Islands (Cook Islands News/PIR)—Cook Islands political activist and businesswoman Elizabeth Ponga says she accepted the Woman Of The Year award last week for each nominee and for every woman that had fought for a change in the community.

Ponga is a founder of the Group for Political Change, which was formed in 2002 to push for political reforms.

“Now I do not know what is happening with political reform because the election is just around the corner and parliament is not sitting, so I really am not sure as to what will happen next regarding the reforms,” she said.

Her group slammed government undersecretaries, saying their positions should be abolished instead of waiting for the next election.

Ponga said if the government was genuine about it “then it should be so easy to have those positions abolished.”

Business and Professional Women’s Association president Dawn Baudinet says Ponga was deserving of her award.

“It’s her gutsiness and strength and the value of what she does,

and with her business, she is hugely respected,” she says. “Elizabeth is a fighter, she can tackle anything that is put in front of her head on, but not without doing her homework first, she does her research, doesn’t let herself down or compromise herself with her business.”

Many of the nominees for the 2003 BPW awards were from the outer islands, but were unable to attend the occasion. “These women were enormously represented,” says Baudinet.

“It is very good encouragement, we were overwhelmed and proud that these women are now breaking through their own barriers,” she says. “That’s an absolute strength in itself, as in the past women in the outer islands were sometimes very shy.”

TVNZ One news reporter Barbara Dreaver was flown in by Air New Zealand as guest speaker for the night. Baudinet says BPW want to see the awards continue next year.

“Without sponsorship from the private sector who have been incredibly generous, the awards may not have taken place. “It is important that we continue the awards for women of the Cook Islands.”

2 great sedans
cmyk

Noise levels seen to go up at AMP



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Guests try out the new rifle range at the Saipan Southern High School after the ribbon cutting ceremony that was held Friday last week.

SSHS opens new outdoor rifle range

The Manta Ray Battalion cadets of the Saipan Southern High School have reason to be happy these days with the inauguration of a newly constructed rifle range.

A brief ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Friday last week at the school's campus for the new facility.

Before the ribbon-cutting ceremony, battalion executive officer Cadet Major Herano Imperial gave the guests a briefing on the history and planning stage of the Rifle Range.

The briefing also covered the safety measures required to be applied before, during, and after each shooting session.

The range is built in compli-

ance with the safety standards required by the U.S. Army Cadet Command Regulation Number 145-2.

The caliber of rifles allowed to be discharged at this range is strictly the .177 cal (4.5MM) pellet-air rifle. Marksmanship standards used for competition in the CNMI with the .177 cal (4.5MM) air rifle is the National Rifle Association Regulation.

Among the guest at the ribbon cutting ceremony were school principal Peter Le'au, vice principle Craig Garrison, the governor's Advisor for Military & Veterans Affairs Frank Cepeda, CNMI MSU JROTC Operations & Liaison Officer CSM Doroteo Aguigui, Military Property Cus-

todian SFC Celestin Damian, and Dolphin Battalion Army Instructor SFC Pedro Gloria. SGM Kiyoshi, Sai and SFC Haugh Ai of the Manta Ray Battalion were also present for the ceremony.

With the combat engineer skills of Army Instructor SFC Richard Haugh, the hard working, highly energetic Manta Ray cadets had the proper guidance in planning, and locating the resources and materials needed to build their regulation outdoor .177 (4.5MM) range.

The building task included many after-school hours and weekends of continuous dedicated work by both Haugh, Kiyoshi, and the cadet leadership of the Manta Ray Battalion.

A new phase of construction will begin at American Memorial Park's Visitor Center beginning this week.

According to an AMP statement, about 40 posts reaching depths of about 80 to 100 feet are going to be pile driven into the ground this week. It is expected that noise levels will be quite high as the long posts are pounded into the ground, it said.

Park Manager Chuck Sayon said the park's ground would not be able to support the new 10,000 sq. ft. Visitors Center Building if the pile driving is

not done due to the soils and grounds at the park being unconsolidated beach sands and the area being a former marsh and wetland.

"The pile are being driven down until it hits bedrock; once in place then that is what the foundation of the Visitors Center will be attached to," said Sayon. "It is like building a high platform on the ocean, except this is on land, with the legs going very deep into the earth."

Structurally, this is needed to support the Visitors Center Building's foundation from future soil settling and to be able

to handle most earthquakes and seismic activity that occasionally happen here in the Mariana Islands.

"The Park apologizes for any inconvenience to our neighbors due to the high noise caused by the pounding," said Sayon, "but it has to be done."

The pounding will be done during regular weekly business hours.

"I, too, will be looking forward to when it [pile driving] is over in two weeks," said Sayon, as business operations at the Park will also be disturbed.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NEW BOARD MEMBER

Gov. Juan N. Babauta swears in Nicholas Nekai as the newest board member of the Marianas Public Land Authority. The appointment of Nekai was confirmed by the Senate last week.

PIC lauds outstanding employees in March

Pacific Islands Club Saipan has announced its March Employees of the Month, congratulating them for their outstanding efforts and dedication to the team.

Anna Lissa Villadiego from the Accounting Department was honored as the "Heart of the House" Employee of the Month.

Anna joined PIC in June 2003 as an Accounts Receivable Clerk and, within eight months, has proven herself to be a dedicated and hardworking employee who works diligently to collect PIC's outstanding accounts.

"Anna is an extremely responsible employee who completes her work assignments in a timely manner to ensure quality and consistency. She is professional under pressure and is always willing



Kazu Ogata to lend a hand," said PIC in a statement.

Sung Bai Kim was honored as the "Front of the House" Employee of the Month. Sung Bai was recently promoted to Kids' Club Captain in the Sports, Entertainment and Activities Department. He has been recognized for his creativity, professionalism and friendly disposition.



Bart Baysauli

"His personalized attention to the needs of PIC's younger guests enjoying the Kids' Club creates a "win-win" holiday experience for both parents and kids alike. PIC values his outstanding performance and realizes that it is employees like Sung Bai Kim that make PIC a great place to stay," the hotel added.

Kazu Ogata of the Front

Office Department was named PIC's Supervisor of the Quarter.

He joined the PIC team four years ago and, according to PIC, has continuously demonstrated genuine enthusiasm, energy and professionalism in completing his tasks.

"His organizational skills and hard work enable the department to fulfill its responsibilities on time and ensures a pleasant guest experience from the busiest guest contact department. He works hard to make sure all guests are satisfied and feel welcome upon arrival at PIC so they can return in the future for another visit," PIC said.

PIC's Engineering Manager, Bart Baysauli, was honored as the Manager of the Quarter.

According to PIC, Bart is a hands-on manager who assists his staff to ensure that all of their



Sung Bai Kim and Anna Lissa Villadiego

projects are done promptly and quickly. Bart works responsively to maintain PIC's equipment, whether it be the air conditioning units or the power plant to occasional malfunctions in the guest rooms.

"His thoroughness and preventative maintenance measures are on display at the hotel as guests and staff are able to enjoy the beauty of PIC's resort experience," the hotel-resort said.

Business

State tax credits look to reward behavior

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—Do volunteer firefighters deserve a tax break? How about nurses? Or gym rats? People in each group would be eligible for special state tax credits under bills before New York's Legislature.

Such targeted tax breaks have been bestowed in recent years on diverse groups nationwide—adoptive parents in California, food banks supporters in Michigan, historic barn restorers in New York.

These people benefit at tax time based not on what they earn, but on what they do. Such socially conscious tax credits have proliferated in recent years, according to experts. While lawmakers see the credits as a way of encouraging behavior beneficial to society, critics claim they are steadily mucking up the tax system.

"In the '60s and '70s, we started using the tax system for social engineering with a ven-

geance," said Richard Pomp, tax expert and professor at the University of Connecticut School of Law. "Now it's this do-gooder philosophy: 'Hey you're a good guy! Why don't we give you a credit?'"

Tax credits have been around for generations. Unlike tax deductions, which reduce total taxable income, credits reduce dollar for dollar actual taxes owed.

The bulk of tax credits go

to businesses and reward economically desired behavior like expansions and research. Another popular type of credit is designed to lessen the tax burden on groups that might be financially stressed, like low-income workers or farmers.

Then there are credits that reward certain behaviors—like conserving energy. While they are not necessarily tied to income levels, these credits can help defray costs of doing good.

Consider California's maximum \$2,500 tax credit for adoptive parents.

Harley Duncan, executive director of the Federation of Tax Administrators, said socially oriented tax credits have been around at least since the energy crisis of the '70s spawned breaks for spending on fuel efficiency. But tax experts say they have become popular in recent years, particularly in the flush years of the late '90s.

Georgia has a tax credit of up to \$5,000 for rural doctors and Indiana has a tax credit for historic home rehabilitation. Oregon and North Carolina are among the states with tax credits for certain charitable contributions.

Law books in many states now include tax credits for purchasing energy-efficient devices. New York's tax code includes credits for purchasers of solar power equipment and fuel cells.



RAFFY ARROYO

COSMOS MOVES TO A NEW HOME

Dave Sablan, president of Century Insurance Co. Ltd., shows off a Ferrero Rocher chocolate to George Chiu, Cosmos vice president, and Jerry Tan, Tan Holdings executive vice president, during the official opening of the new offices of Cosmos at the second floor of the Tun Kiku building on Middle Road in Garapan. Cosmos is the exclusive distributor of Ferrero Rocher in the CNMI.

Gas prices reach record high of \$1.77

CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP)—Prices for all grades of gasoline rose 1.34 cents in the last two weeks to a record high nationwide average of \$1.77 a gallon, according to a study released Sunday.

Gas prices have jumped by nearly 26 cents so far this year, and while they won't be falling by that amount any time soon, they aren't expected to rise much higher, according to the Lundberg survey of 8,000 stations nationwide. The survey was conducted Friday.

The previous combined average record high was \$1.76 in May 2001.

Analyst Trilby Lundberg said the latest spike reflects the rise in crude oil prices and an increase in refinery work to prepare for greater spring and summer gasoline demand.

OPEC declared earlier this year that it would reduce official oil production by April 1 and crack down on those countries exceeding the level.

"Where crude oil prices go next—whether they push or pull on gas prices—is OPEC's guess," she said.

Lundberg said work at the refineries is nearly complete. "The pace of the pump

price hike has slowed and prices are dropping on a spotty basis around the country," she said.

In California, prices remain higher than the rest of the country due to the state's strict environmental regulations and sales tax on gas pumps. Still, pump prices dropped nearly a penny in the last two weeks to \$2.10 per gallon.

The national weighted average price of gasoline, including taxes, at self-serve pumps Friday was about \$1.74 for regular, \$1.84 for midgrade and \$1.92 for premium.

Ford vans to get stabilizing equipment

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP)—Ford Motor Co. plans to begin equipping its 15-passenger vans with electronic stabilizing technology starting with the 2006 model year, a move designed to increase the safety of a type of vehicle the federal government and some motorists' lawyers contend has a significant roll-over risk.

The equipment is similar to a system the automaker introduced on its Volvo XC90 sport utility vehicle and SUVs such as the Lincoln Aviator and Navigator, Ford spokeswoman Carolyn Brown said Sunday. Even without the new

safety feature, Ford maintains the vans are safe and reliable.

"The vehicle is a very safe vehicle," Brown said. "People just need to understand ... that it's not a car. It has a higher center of gravity. It should not be overloaded. It should not be driven at excessive speed."

Last month, Ford settled a lawsuit in Texas over a van-rollover crash that killed three young missionaries in Mexico in 2002. The case was the first involving its 15-passenger E-350 Econoline van to reach trial in six years. The trial ended with a confidential settlement negotiated after two

days of testimony.

An attorney for the plaintiffs blamed the crash on several design defects; Ford said the cause was tire failure.

In 2002, the government renewed a safety warning for 15-passenger vans, which often are used by churches, sports teams and other groups. When carrying 10 or more people, the vans are three times more likely to roll over than lightly loaded vans, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found.

An NHTSA spokesman did not immediately return a call Sunday seeking comment on Ford's plan.

Experts: 1794 silver dollar may be first

DENVER (AP)—Currency experts say they have identified a 210-year-old silver dollar that could be the first one coined by the United States Mint.

The American Numismatic Association, a currency organization based in Colorado Springs, told The Associated Press on Sunday it planned to put the coin on public display beginning in mid-April.

Experts said it's impossible to say for certain that the coin was the very first U.S. silver dollar struck, but its details are so crisp that it cer-

tainly was among the first.

"Until someone walks up to me with a coin in an earlier state that looks better, I'd consider it the first," said John Dannreuther, co-founder of Professional Coin Grading Service.

Unlike the other roughly 130 surviving U.S. dollars minted in 1794, the silver dollar is in mint condition, according to evaluations performed by Professional Coin Grading Service and Numismatic Guaranty Corp.

The coin, which has only a few scratches, features images of Lady

Liberty ringed with stars on the front and an eagle on the back.

Steven Contursi, owner of Rare Coin Wholesalers, bought the coin last year from an unidentified owner and said he spent "multimillions." It is insured for \$10 million.

The dealer who sold Contursi the dollar—not realizing it could be the first of its kind—has since offered him a \$2 million profit on it.

But it's not for sale, Contursi said: "I think it's a national treasure," he said.

crm

US erodes high-tech privacy protections

By MICHAEL J. SNIFFEN
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—When Congress curtailed Pentagon research it feared would ensnare innocent Americans in the terrorism fight, it also allowed the Bush administration to eliminate two projects to protect citizens' privacy from futuristic tools.

As a result, the government is quietly pressing ahead with research into high-powered computer data-mining technology without the two most advanced

privacy protections developed for those terror-fighting tools.

"It's very inconsistent what they've done," said Teresa Lunt of the Palo Alto Research Center and head of one of the two government-funded privacy projects eliminated last fall.

Even members of Congress such as Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., who led the fight to restrict the Pentagon terrorism research over its privacy implications, remain uncertain about the nature of the research or the safeguards.

"We feel Congress is not get-

ting enough information about who is undertaking this research and where it's headed and how they intend to protect the civil liberties of Americans," said Chris Fitzgerald, Wyden's spokesman.

The privacy projects were small parts of the Pentagon's Terrorism Information Awareness research.

The project was the brainchild of retired Adm. John Poindexter, who was driven from the Reagan administration in 1986 over the Iran-Contra scandal. Some 15 years later, he was summoned

back by the Bush administration to develop data-mining tools for the fight against terrorism.

Poindexter's new software tools, far more powerful than existing commercial products, would have allowed government agents to quickly scan the private commercial transactions and personal health records of millions of Americans and foreigners for tell-tale signs of terrorist activity.

Partly to appease critics, Poindexter also was developing two tools that would have concealed names on records during the

scans. Only if agents discovered concrete evidence of terrorist activities would they have been permitted to learn the identities of the people whose records aroused suspicion.

One privacy project worked with Poindexter's Genisys program, which scanned government and commercial records for terrorist planning. The other was part of his Bio-ALIRT program, which scanned private health records for evidence of biological attacks.

Late last year, Congress

closed Poindexter's office in the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in response to the uproar over its impact on privacy.

But Congress allowed some Poindexter projects, including some data-mining research, to be transferred to intelligence agencies. Congress also left intact similar data-mining research begun in the fall of 2002 by the Advanced Research and Development Activity (ARDA), a little-known office that works on behalf of U.S. intelligence.



JUMBO FLIER

A crew with Antonov International Cargo Transfer work to get tracks into place Sunday, March 14, 2004, outside one of the company's 124-100 long-range freighter jets at La Crosse Municipal Airport in La Crosse, Wis. The aircraft, one of the worlds largest, was in La Crosse to pick up a 33-ton cold box manufactured by Chart Heat Exchangers Division and fly it to Australia.

Duke Energy to sell Asia-Pacific assets

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)—Duke Energy Corp. will sell all of its assets in Australia and New Zealand to Australian natural gas company Alinta Ltd. for \$1.24 billion, the North Carolina company said Sunday.

Alinta, based in Perth, Australia, distributes natural gas in western Australia. Charlotte, N.C.-based Duke Energy said it expected to close the all-cash sale of its gas pipelines and power plants by July.

The assets include one New Zealand power plant, several generating plants in Australia, undersea gas pipelines to Tasmania and others in the eastern Australian state of Queensland,

Duke Energy spokesman Peter Sheffield said.

Duke Energy chairman and chief executive Paul Anderson, who succeeded Rick Priory in November, announced in January the company would sell assets in Australia and Europe and its U.S. energy trading unit, as well as close or sell power plants in the U.S. Southeast.

The company has said it expected the asset sales to fetch about \$1.5 billion in 2004.

The sales represent an effort to reduce Duke's long-term \$22.5 billion debt, which has led credit-rating agencies to downgrade the company's debt to near-junk status.

"This sale will go a long way towards meeting our asset divestiture target for 2004, and will further strengthen the Duke Energy balance sheet," Anderson said Sunday in a statement.

In January, Duke reported its worst losses in nearly 100 years of business, posting a \$2 billion loss for the last three months of 2003 as the company absorbed bad investments in energy trading and domestic and international wholesale energy production.

For the full year, Duke lost \$1.3 billion, reversing a \$1 billion profit the previous year. Worldwide, the company has cut 4,000 full-time and contract employees since the start of 2002.

Farmers: Reynolds cutting leaf purchases

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)—R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. will cut its leaf orders by nearly half this year, according to North Carolina tobacco growers.

Company spokesman David Howard declined to discuss the second-largest U.S. cigarette maker's purchasing plans on Sunday.

"In terms of our purchases, our

strategy is based on what we think volumes would be, what we anticipate what our needs will be," Howard said. "As the year goes on that might change."

State Agriculture Commissioner Britt Cobb said his department had been besieged with calls over the weekend from farmers who had been told the news.

"The word is filtering around pretty strongly," Cobb said. "Farmers are worried. All we can do is just continue trying to develop some new markets for leaf tobacco."

Reynolds and Richmond, Va.-based Philip Morris USA, the country's top cigarette maker, together purchase most of North Carolina's flue-cured tobacco.

EDS selling software design business

DALLAS (AP)—Electronic Data Systems Corp. ended its three-year stint in the software development industry, announcing Sunday it was selling its product design software business to a trio of private investment firms for \$2.05 billion cash.

The sale of UGS PLM Solutions puts EDS a step closer to the company's goal of zero net debt by the end of 2004, EDS spokesman Sean Healy said. UGS PLM Solutions, which is based at EDS's Plano, Texas, headquarters, makes product design and development software.

Bain Capital LLC of Boston, Silver Lake Partners LP of Menlo Park, Calif., and New York-based Warburg Pincus LLC purchased the business.

Healy said the subsidiary's sale will help EDS, which manages computers systems for other companies, "certainly improves our financial position and competitive flexibility."

UGS PLM Solutions has about 5,000 employees.

Bill Janeway, Warburg Pincus' vice chairman, told The Associated Press Sunday he doesn't anticipate any major changes in the company's oper-

ation. Janeway said he supports the management team already led by UGS PLM Solutions president and chief executive Tony Affuso.

Former EDS chief executive Dick Brown formed UGS PLM Solutions in 2001 as a way to lure more customers and to make sales to high profile clientele such as General Motors Co.

Companies using the unit's software include Boeing Co., Samsung Electronics, Nokia Corp. and Mitsubishi Electric Corp.

EDS reported 2003 revenue of \$21.5 billion.

In NJ hometown, Martha Stewart innocent

NUTLEY, N.J. (AP)—Back home, Martha Stewart is still Martha Kostyra—a fresh-faced blonde with a Betty Crocker perm, the only girl in advanced math, the one who dreamed of a modeling career and played Saturday night pingpong matches at Terry Verdi's house. Above all, she's still innocent.

People wince over her painful fall from grace, holding fast to the Martha they knew—and to the notion that she was targeted for who she was, not what she did.

"It's a travesty what's happening," said Mike Geltrude, 64, a classmate from Nutley High School's Class of '59. "She was a good person and I still believe she's a good person."

Many agree in this upper-middle class bedroom community of 27,300 people, sitting just 12 miles west of New York City. And the few who believe she did do something wrong say a prison sentence would be too harsh for Stewart's conviction for lying about a stock sale.

"She got singled out," said Claudio Carchia, 46, owner of C&M Beauty Supplies. "I don't think she should do jail time. This goes on every day."

Martha was 3 when parents Edward and Martha Kostyra moved their six children to Nutley from nearby Jersey City. He was a pharmaceuticals salesman, she a teacher.

In their modest three-story home at 86 Elm Place, young Martha learned about good

things. By 4, her father was teaching her gardening. She got baking and sewing lessons from her mother.

A straight-A student, she belonged to almost every club there was at Nutley High School. And while she wasn't voted most likely to succeed—that was Barbara Viveni and Parke Richards—she was treasurer of her senior class.

The tall, pretty girl shows up on almost every other page of the 1959 yearbook, including a candid shot of the advanced mathematics class where she was the only girl among 25 students.

Her senior portrait was captioned with the quote: "I do what I please, and I do it with ease." But Geltrude said the quote was written by yearbook editors, not Stewart herself.

Verdi, an administrative secretary at Nutley High for 48 years, remembers when Stewart and other friends of her son gathered in her attic recreation room.

She guards Stewart's image almost as closely as she guards the school's lone remaining copy of the leather-bound 1959 yearbook. It's kept in a safe in the front office.

Martha Kostyra? A criminal? Verdi doesn't buy it. She thinks as highly of her as she ever did.

"I don't know anything about her corporation, but I know

there's top people in our society who've lied and gotten away with it," said Verdi, a 70ish great-grandmother. "Is it because she's a woman, that they want to make an example of her?"

In the school cafeteria hangs a framed copy of the Feb. 20, 1959, Maroon and Gray school newspaper, with a front-page story headlined "Photogenic Senior Makes T.V. Spots a Pleasure."

It describes the budding modeling career of Martha Kost—"... better known within the halls of N.H.S. as Martha Kostyra ..."—and her plans to work her way through college.

She returned to Nutley often.

She was one of 10 distinguished alumni who participated in a 1985 "Salute to Greatness," speaking to students about her time at Nutley High and her career. She returned for class reunions in 1969 and 1999, mixing casually with old friends and posing for photographs with anyone who asked.

At the 40-year reunion, she pulled organizer Geltrude aside and told him she would pay the bar tab for the evening but not to make a fuss about it.

Last September, Stewart took her place among the inaugural inductees to the Nutley Hall of Fame, an honor also bestowed on 19th-century sharpshooter Annie Oakley, another former Nutley resident.



Stewart



World

Life & Style

‘American Idol’ set for the final rounds

By LYNN ELBER
AP TELEVISION WRITER

So far, breathtakingly untalented William Hung is the big hit of this season's "American Idol." The situation should change Tuesday as the 12 freshly minted finalists take the stage for a two-hour show and the chance to really let TV viewers see what they've got.

It's about time, say some discontented observers and tough-love judge Simon Cowell, who's dripping more acid than usual in the third season of the Fox talent extravaganza.

"You'd probably agree that the heats have been fairly lackluster," Cowell told The Associated Press. Even standout finalist La Toya London, 24, of Hawthorne, Calif., earns his gimlet eye.

"She was good, that was a good performance, but there's another part

of me that thinks we thought she was great because everyone else is so terrible," he said.

At KZLA, a Los Angeles-area radio station that has avidly followed each season of "American Idol," attitudes toward the show have soured. Last Wednesday, disc jockey Peter Tilden told listeners he was so appalled by the talent this year that he boycotted the wild card special the night before.

But the TV audience is unfazed. Ratings are up 31 percent in total viewers and 26 percent among the advertiser-favored group of adults 18 to 49, happily reports co-executive producer Ken Warwick.

He and the finalists insist viewers know what's good.

"Honestly, I think the competition this year is more tough because everybody is so (musically) diverse in this top 12," said

Jasmine Trias, 17, of Mililani on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

"I think everybody is so, so talented," said exuberant Jennifer Hudson, 22, of Chicago, Ill. "I don't think America's seen our best yet. Look out for group three!"

Hudson, making a Betty Boop fashion statement last week with curls and a pink frock, wowed judge Randy Jackson with her performance of "I Believe in You and Me." She became his wild card pick, one of four who got a second chance to keep competing for a record contract.

Jackson believes that Hudson is right and scowling Cowell dead wrong in assessing the field.

"This is the first bunch that we've had that wasn't boring," Jackson said. "With this bunch there definitely will be sparks and wild, crazy antics going on."

They include several poetically named songbirds (Fantasia, Jasmine, Camile), a contingent of teenagers who still have to get in their daily schooling, and a 25-year old mortgage banker (Matthew Rogers made the contest cut-off age, 24, during auditions.)

In this third go-around, what is Jackson looking for in an idol? Rich-voiced Kelly Clarkson and "velvet teddy bear" Ruben Studdard were the first and second season winners.

"I'm looking for uniqueness. Unique voice, unique sense of style and a unique star kind of ability,"

Jackson said. "I think that, for me, this is the first group that I've actually seen two people that I think are stars."

For the record, he's not naming names.

So why is Jackson playing Simon Says, matching the bluntness of his fellow judge's reviews? (Paula Abdul, America's sweetheart, is as kind and non-committal as ever in her assessments.)

Because contestants now have examples to follow, Jackson said.

"They saw the first season; Kelly can blow. The second season, Ruben and Clay (Aiken, the runner-up) can blow. You can watch tapes, go back to your TiVo—you have the blueprints, so HOW could you be so messed up now, dude? C'mon, dawg."

Makeover puts a slow on Simpson's 'Skin'

By RANDY LEWIS
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Norah Jones logged her fourth week atop the national album sales chart by selling 204,000 copies of her sophomore album, "Feels Like Home," last week, but it is pop pinup girl Jessica Simpson who has grabbed the industry's attention.

Simpson's 7-month-old "In This Skin" album catapulted from No. 16 to No. 2 after Columbia Records re-released it with a bonus DVD, extra tracks and an in-store promotion campaign that has caused near-rioting.

"In This Skin" tripled its weekly album sales figure last week, moving 160,000 copies to push its total since release past the 1 million mark, according to the Nielsen SoundScan sales monitoring service.

At a time when records, especially those by acts appealing predominantly to very young fans, are quickly pronounced dead if they haven't turned



multi-platinum in the first few weeks of release, the new lease on life for Simpson's album underscores an adage gaining new respect in the record industry's tough times: Don't give up.

The "collector's edition" of "In This Skin," released last week, includes her new version of Berlin's 1986 hit "Take My Breath Away" as well as a DVD including footage of her wedding to singer Nick Lachey and excerpts from their MTV reality se-

ries "Newlyweds." Four teens were arrested last week at a Boston Wal-Mart that was mobbed by an estimated 5,000 fans who turned out to catch a glimpse of Simpson. Police shut down the event early, voicing concern for public safety.

Another in-store event scheduled for Monday in Dallas has been canceled, but it is not clear if it is because of public safety issues.

Outside of Simpson's leap, the Top 10 album list remained much the same as it was last week. R-and-B singer Cee-Lo had the highest debut, entering at No. 13 on sales of 56,000 copies of his latest, "Cee-Lo Green ... Is the Soul Machine."

Pavarotti says farewell at Met

NEW YORK (AP)—The great ones have the hardest time saying goodbye. For 11 minutes, Luciano Pavarotti soaked up the bravos after Saturday night's performance of "Tosca" at the Metropolitan Opera.

It was his final night of staged opera, the 68-year-old tenor had revealed Friday, the end of a career that began 43 years earlier. He stuck out his arms, and he waved to the crowd. He put his hands together and bowed his head in tribute to his fans. He touched his heart, and he blew kisses.

His face, still stained near his right eye with fake blood from the performance, was filled with emotion. From the grand tier of the Metropolitan Opera hung a huge red banner with white letters: "WE LOVE YOU LUCIANO" it read, a heart replacing the "O" in "LOVE."

The ovations could have gone on much longer—they stopped only be-

cause the hefty Pavarotti seemed to be having so much trouble walking on stage in front of the big gold curtain. There were four solo curtain calls in all, plus two with soprano Carol Vaness and three with the larger cast, including conductor James Levine, who pushed Pavarotti back in front of the curtain for one more appearance after all the others had left.

All night long, Pavarotti appeared to be fighting to keep his emotions under control.

There was a 35-second ovation when he walked on stage in the first act. His voice sounded constricted for his first aria, "Recondita armonia (Oh hidden harmony)," which was barely audible in sections, and he kept his eyes closed for much of the time, appearing to revel in the moment.

His big third-act aria, "E lucevan le stelle (And the stars shone)" was followed by another two-minute ovation as

flashbulbs popped throughout an auditorium where photography is forbidden. He even broke character and waved to the crowd.

It was the biggest farewell ovation at the Met since soprano Leonie Rysanek said goodbye in January 1996. And, in some ways, this was similar to Leontyne Price's final "Aida" on Jan. 3, 1985—while the performance wasn't noteworthy for the singing, the singing brought back memories of so many great nights.

The normally staid Met printed a special 20-page section in the program that detailed the career of Pavarotti, who was singing his 379th performance with the company since his debut in "La Boheme" on Nov. 23, 1968.

Asked Friday why he was retiring from opera—he still plans concerts up until his 70th birthday on Oct. 12, 2005—Pavarotti said: "I think it's time."



‘Passion’ moves beyond \$250M mark

By DAVID GERMAIN
AP MOVIE WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—“The Passion of the Christ” was the top film for a third straight weekend, taking in \$31.7 million and pushing its total beyond a quarter of a billion dollars.

Mel Gibson’s dramatization of Christ’s final hours climbed to \$264 million in the United States and Canada after 19 days in theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday.

With solid receipts expected through Easter on April 11, “The Passion” is on track to gross between \$350 million and \$400 million, said Rob Schwartz, head of distribution for Newmarket Films, which handled

the release.

That would put it on par with “The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,” which took in another \$2.05 million over the weekend to push its total to \$371.2 million.

Johnny Depp’s psychological horror tale “Secret Window,” based on a Stephen King story about an author accused of plagiarism by a stalker, debuted in second place with \$19 million.

“The Passion” lifted Hollywood to its third-straight uptick in revenues after a long slump in January and February. “The Passion” has single-handedly made what was turning out to be a pretty lousy year into a really good year so far,” Dergarabedian said.



Simon of Cyrene (Jarrett Merz) helps Jesus (Jim Caviezel) carry his Cross in a scene from the movie “The Passion of the Christ.”

Starring Jim Caviezel as Christ, “The Passion” continues to draw well among church groups that helped make it a religious blockbuster, but the film is packing in much broader audiences, said Newmarket’s Schwartz.

“It’s a large cross-section of America,” Schwartz said. “It’s not just church groups going at this point. It’s way beyond that.”

Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore’s romantic comedy “50 First Dates” had a \$5.3 million weekend and pushed its total to \$106.6 million, following “The Passion” as the second movie released in 2004 to cross the \$100 million mark.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at North American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc. Final figures will be released Monday.

1. **“The Passion of the Christ,”** \$31.7 million.
2. **“Secret Window,”** \$19 million.
3. **“Starsky & Hutch,”** \$16 million.
4. **“Hidalgo,”** \$11.7 million.
5. **“Agent Cody Banks: Destination London,”** \$8 million.
6. **“50 First Dates,”** \$5.3 million.
7. **“Twisted,”** \$3.1 million.
8. **“Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen,”** \$2.4 million.
9. **“The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King,”** \$2.05 million.
10. **“Spartan,”** \$2 million.

Rooney sparks outcry with Gibson remark

NEW YORK (AP)—Andy Rooney certainly knows how to stir the passion in his viewers. The “60 Minutes” curmudgeon said Sunday he got 30,000 pieces of mail and e-mail in response to his Feb. 22 commentary, in which he called “The Passion of the Christ” filmmaker Mel Gibson a “wacko.”

It’s the biggest viewer response ever to a segment on the CBS newsmagazine, which has been on the air since 1968, a spokesman said.

Rooney also called the Rev. Pat Robertson a “wacko” for saying he had a conversation with God, but not many people noticed that, he said. Most of his mail concerned Gibson.

“I think the mail was a good indication of how bitterly divided our country is right now,” Rooney said on his Sunday “60 Minutes” commentary. “I hope I’m not contributing to that—even though I’m right and everyone else is wrong.”

He read some of the mail on the air, including one letter that

called him an “asinine, bottom-dwelling, numb-skulled, low-life, slimy, sickening, gutless, spineless, ignorant, pot-licking, cowardly pathetic little weasel.”

Rooney, 85, noted that many of his critics took shots at his age. Even Fox News Channel’s Bill O’Reilly said he was too old.

“That wasn’t nice, Bill,” he said. “I didn’t get old on purpose. It just happened. If you’re lucky, it could happen to you.”

Playing in 3,221 theaters, “The Passion” averaged \$9,830 a cinema, a huge number for a movie in its third weekend. “Secret Window” averaged \$6,296 in 3,018 theaters, “Agent Cody Banks” did \$2,691 in 2,973 cinemas and “Spartan” averaged \$2,440 in 832 locations.

Cody Banks is back and that’s good

By KEVIN THOMAS
LOS ANGELES TIMES

HOLLYWOOD—Frankie Muniz’s teenage spy is back for more high-spirited escapades in “Agent Cody Banks: Destination London,” which is as ingenious and lively as the original film last year that introduced the Seattle high school student recruited by the CIA. By now Cody realizes he’s on permanent call from the agency, which has sent him to a very special summer camp where he’s just one of a large number of teens being trained by the CIA, a disturbing notion the filmmakers wisely don’t give us time to ponder.

When parents arrive on visiting day, Kamp Woody looks like any other summer camp, but that’s because with the push of various buttons all its elaborate military and espionage hardware becomes swiftly hidden: one minute girls are working at intricate electronic panels, the next they’re weaving baskets, the panels having swiftly flipped. The tough-guy camp commander, Diaz (Keith Allen), isn’t kidding when he instructs his students to trust no one—“not even me.”



Hannah Spearitt and Frankie Muniz in MGM’s Agent Cody Banks 2: Destination London.

Shortly thereafter, Diaz, a 20-year CIA veteran, defects with mind control software. The agency has intelligence revealing that Diaz intends to link up with Lord Kenworth (James Faulkner), a British industrialist who has invented a Frankensteinian device that, once attached to the head of his own dog, turns the animal into a piano-playing pooch. Kenworth can control bodies, Diaz can control minds, and together these two baddies could rule the world. All they have to do is anesthetize their

intended targets and implant a microchip by which they will be able to control his or her thoughts and movements.

Cody is dispatched to London as a member of the International Youth Symphony, which just happens to be sponsored by the sweetly obtuse Lady Kenworth (Anna Chancellor). The young musicians will be staying at the Kenworth estate, a vast and glorious Victorian Gothic pile outside London, in preparation for performing at a Buckingham Palace banquet, where Queen Elizabeth

II will be hosting a summit of world leaders—at which Lord and Lady Kenworth will be guests. Clearly, Cody has got to stop Diaz and the dastardly nobleman.

As is obvious, this is an elaborate setup, but director Kevin Allen and his writers miss no opportunities for mining humor in all the film’s fast-moving twists and turns. Grand heart-of-London settings and a clutch of terrific British comedians in the supporting cast make for a handsome, often hilarious comedy-adventure that strikes a deft balance of humor and action.

Never mind the unlikelihood that the CIA would send over a young agent, Derek (Anthony Anderson), on probation as Cody’s handler when the fate of the world is at stake. It’s a good thing, for Derek is a fun-loving, freewheeling presence who for all his reckless rambunctiousness is just as resourceful and quick-thinking as Cody. When so much of what passes for comedy these days is crass and heavy-handed, it’s gratifying to discover something as blithe-spirited as the Agent Cody Banks movies and an actor as likably unpretentious as the gifted Frankie Muniz.

wallace

Hundreds line up to star in 'Apprentice'

BURBANK, Calif. (AP)—The line to audition for the second season of the hit reality show "The Apprentice" stretched the length of four football fields outside NBC's Burbank studios as more than 1,000 people sought a spot on the program featuring billionaire Donald Trump.

Trump was not present Saturday because "Apprentice" producers didn't want to overshadow his appearance at Thursday's auditions in New York. More than a dozen casting calls will take place in cities including Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Miami and San Francisco.

Kevan Moezzi of Seal Beach

showed up 19 hours early to earn wristband No. 3, meaning he was third in line to be interviewed. He and two others slept outside the studios to be first in line.

"If I get this show, it will open up so many opportunities," Moezzi said. "I gotta get in there and show them what it takes."

Rob LaPlant, the show's casting producer, said he is looking for "real people" to join the show.

"The worst thing someone can do here is not talk," he said. "We throw out a topic and see how they react."

Donald Trump is seen during the Los Angeles Confidential Magazine Welcomes "The Apprentice" to Hollywood event, held at Bliss, in this Feb. 26, 2004 file photo in Hollywood, Calif.

AP



Kid Rock inducting Seger into Rock Hall

DETROIT (AP)—Kid Rock will present friend and fellow Michigander Bob Seger at Seger's induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on Monday.

Kid Rock says he counts Seger among those who influenced him. And Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm is planning to issue a proclamation naming Monday Bob Seger Day.

"I'm going to shoot from the heart, and make this fun for his fans, his friends, his family, his band," Kid Rock told the Detroit Free Press for a Friday story.



Seger

"I want to reiterate what he did with his music - not only making Michigan and Detroit proud, but his friends and family, because this is really special for him," he said.

Seger became eligible for the hall of fame in 1989 - 25 years after releasing his first single, the regional hit "East Side Story."

The presentation will take place before a black-tie crowd at Manhattan's Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Other 2004 inductees include Prince, Jackson Browne, ZZ Top, Traffic, the Dells and the late George Harrison.

More religious films may follow 'Passion'

AUSTIN, Texas (AP)—Expect a slew of religious movies following the extraordinary success of "The Passion of the Christ," said the head of the company that released the film.

"It will probably start trends and everything but at the end of the day, the films have to be pretty spectacular," said Bob Berney, president of Newmarket Films. "The audience, no matter what, is pretty discerning."

Berney was among several independent film distributors who spoke Saturday during the South by Southwest film festival.

He said "The Passion," Mel Gibson's graphically violent rendering of the Crucifixion of Christ, already has passed 2002's "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" as the highest-grossing independent film. "Greek

Wedding" made \$241 million; Berney expected that "The Passion" will have earned \$260 million through this weekend.

"The really interesting thing is that I think this shows that independent production and distribution can be at any level," Berney said of the film, which Gibson directed, produced and co-wrote and spent \$25 million of his own money to make.

Newmarket is being offered bigger movies but will keep its focus on independent fare, Berney said. Other recent Newmarket releases include "Monster," which earned Charlize Theron a best-actress Oscar, and the critically acclaimed "Whale Rider."

"'Passion' aside, it doesn't mean we want to do only big-release films," he said.

The film festival runs through March 20.

Classmates lower the boom on girl who has lofty goal

By Abigail Van Buren

DEAR ABBY: I am a 13-year-old girl in the eighth grade. For my Health and Human Services class, I had to do an oral report about my future career.

I have wanted to be president of the United States since fifth grade. But when I said that, my teacher laughed at me. He told me I had very little chance of making it, although he didn't say why.

Then, "Jim," another student, started laughing hysterically and said girls aren't allowed to be president. I said, "Yeah, and I'll bet the idiots who came up with that idea were guys!" I was so upset I ran out of the room.

Now, a group of kids at school have started calling me names and spreading rumors about me. Jim even tripped me and made me bite my lip. I try to ignore them, but it's hard. They keep laughing at me, and my teacher is no help. I am losing sleep and feel horrible.

Abby, I didn't realize so much trouble could come out of revealing a dream. It's not like I am not ambitious enough. I'm in the National Junior Honor Society and my poetry has been published in the paper more than once.

I have tried talking to the guidance counselors, but they have done nothing. And when I mention my career ambition to my family, all I get from them is, "That's nice, dear."

Please respond, Abby. My dream is turning into a nightmare.

I HAVE A DREAM

DEAR I HAVE A DREAM: Please clip this and show it to your male chauvinist teacher. Because a woman has never been president of the United States does not mean that it will never happen. Fifty years ago there was a saying, "A woman's place is in the home." Today, more women work outside the home than in it. And this year, for the first time, there were more female applicants to medical schools than male.

Please don't let your classmates get you down. If necessary, ask your parents to get involved to stop the harassment. The people who imply that you cannot fulfill your dreams are wrong. I expect to see a woman be elected president in my lifetime—and who's to say it won't be you? Certainly not this columnist!

□ □ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: I have been going out with my boyfriend for two years. He has two boys, 7 and 9. He has been divorced from his wife for six years. We do not live together, but we would like to share the same bed when I stay overnight.

My boyfriend's 9-year-old son won't allow it. He either tries to get into the bed with my boyfriend or makes comments that he doesn't want us to sleep together. This is trying my patience.

I have tried to be understanding. Am I wrong to be frustrated with the situation? My boyfriend wants to sleep with me, too, but doesn't talk to his son about it; he just gives in.

BUMMED IN BEVERLY, MASS.

DEAR BUMMED: Call me old-fashioned, but if you're looking for sympathy from me, you've come to the wrong place. What adults do in private is their own business. But I don't think unmarried adults should sleep together in front of children. It sends the wrong message. Children want to keep their illusions, and I think adults should let them.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)



AP

Singer Lisa Marie Presley is seen during Fashion Group International's 20th Annual Night of Stars gala in New York, in this Oct. 30, 2003 file photo.

Lisa Marie feels 'nothing' for Jackson

SYDNEY, Australia (AP)—Lisa Marie Presley said she "saw things she could do nothing about" during her brief marriage to Michael Jackson, but refused to elaborate.

In an interview with Australian Broadcasting Corp.'s respected "Enough Rope" talk show to be aired Monday night, Presley said she felt powerless during her marriage to the self-styled King of Pop. Excerpts of the interview were released Sunday.

Presley said she felt "powerless in a lot of ways, in terms of ... realizing that I was part of a machine, and seeing things going on that I couldn't do anything about."

"And don't ask me what sort of things, because I'm not going to answer. But just stuff."

Jackson and Presley, who is in Australia promoting her own singing career, were married from 1994 to 1996. Asked how she felt about Jackson now, Presley replied: "It's really bizarre, I feel nothing."

Jackson has pleaded innocent in California to seven counts of performing lewd or lascivious acts on a child under 14 and two counts of administering an intoxicating agent, reportedly wine. He is free on \$3 million bail pending trial.

Pastimes

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-228-5955! \$49 per minute. Watch today's puzzle, 11:30 a.m. only. A King Features service. NYT.

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By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY

Justin Jeffre, Sean Astin, Lesley Boone, Sally Jessy Raphael

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Having a crusader attitude will make all the difference in the world this year. Be a little stubborn if you think you are right. Be diverse in all that you do and you will meet the demands being put on you and accomplish your goals. Your numbers are 2, 13, 17, 29, 31, 40

EUGENIA
LAST

THE LAST WORD
IN ASTROLOGY

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Push to make others aware of what you are doing and how you believe it will help everyone on some level. If you can sell your ideas to others, you will put yourself in a favorable position.□□□

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

This is a perfect day to make some much-needed adjustments. Opportunities will manifest themselves in the most unusual places, so don't hesitate to talk about your dreams.□□□

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Keeping a secret will be of utmost importance today. By disclosing what you are up to, you could blow a deal or your cover. Work by yourself; question your motives.□□□

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

Do something creative today that can be used to benefit others. The more you do to help make reforms, the better. □□□□

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

You will be misled if you are too gregarious. Tone down and observe what others are doing. Advancement may be at stake. □□

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

You can find an ideal romantic partner if you get out and do things that interest you. Get involved in talks that will stimulate your mind and broaden your perspective about projects you want to pursue. □□□□□

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

Prepare yourself well so that you can follow through with what's necessary as quickly as possible. Don't be lazy or waste time thinking about what you should be doing. □□□

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

Partnerships will be a little hard to handle if you don't take precautions and fully prepare. You can get on with your plans and get the praise you deserve. □□□

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

Your work ethics will pay off, so roll up your shirtsleeves and work alongside others for best results. Your team-player approach will put you in a leadership position. □□□

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

You should be developing your ideas today. If you find someone particularly inspiring, spend time discussing your plans together. Love and romance will be on your doorstep. □□□□□

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

Take the initiative to follow what you feel is the best path and refrain from being led astray. Prepare to take a pass on what others are asking of you. □□

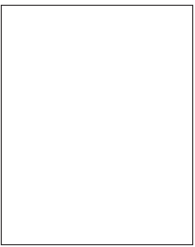
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Your involvement in good causes will be rewarded today. You will begin to see the results of a job well done. Someone unusual, but interesting, will want to get to know you better. □□□□

BIRTHDAY BABY: You are proactive and never take the conventional route. Your outgoing nature always leads to adventure and excitement. You will chase your dreams until you reach your destiny.

Check out Eugenia's Web sites at astroadvice.com and eugenialast.com.

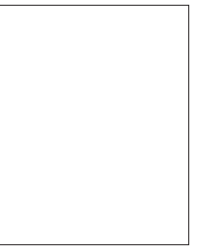




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SAIPAN TRIBUNE